



**STATE OF ARKANSAS
ASA HUTCHINSON, GOVERNOR**

**STATE OF ARKANSAS
ASA HUTCHINSON, GOVERNOR**

Arkansas Women's Commission
Chair: Alison Williams, Chief of Staff to the Governor
Meeting #3 Arkansas State Capitol
April 19, 2022

Attendees In Person: Alison Williams, Apprilla Porch, Maddie Spickard, Senator Breanne Davis, Tamika Edwards, J.D, Heather Larkin, Dr. Kathy White Loyd, Beverly Morrow, Dr. Todd Shields, Mellie Bridewell, Senator Joyce Elliott, Kathy Webb, Kim Lane

Virtual Attendees: Dr. Charisse Childers, Marie Holder, Naija White, Dr. Verónikha Salazar

Absent: Gayatri Agnew

MINUTES

- The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.
- The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming the Commissioners and Visitors and mentioning that meetings are open to the public and live streamed on YouTube and archived on our website.

Old Business

1. Senator Elliott moved to adopt the minutes from the February 22, 2022, meeting. Dr. Jones-Branch seconded.
 - Without Objection, the minutes from the February 22 meeting were adopted.

Subcommittee Reports

- Subcommittee on Research and Writing
 - Has met a couple of times.
 - Important to address the questions identified in the mandate.
 - Study and analyze the core participation of Arkansas Women.
 - Study and analyze labor force participation and barriers to entry into the labor force.
 - Questions answered by several forms of data.
 - Census

- Statewide surveys
 - Online feedback forms/focus groups
 - Individual testimonies
 - Expert Recommendations
- Schedule
 - Collecting Census data and updating Women's Foundation 2018 report, between May and June.
 - Statewide survey of women examining other questions from the Governor's mandate. Would like this done between August and September.
 - Need Subcommittee specific questions by July.
- The Chair opened discussion of subcommittees Roles
 - Bring in experts on various topics that are included in the Governor's mandate.
 - Hearing the recommendations from the experts and individuals who have experienced these hurdles themselves.
 - Conducting focus groups that are specific to a topic, i.e., Covid-19, childcare.
 - Would like questions specific to committee to include on the survey.
 - The online feedback form should be marketed to citizens of the State
 - Heather Larkin raised if the expert work would be a part of the commission work or the subcommittee? Dr. Todd Shields recommended that experts be brought before the Commission so that it can be discussed by all. Dr. Shields stated that as we receive results back, we will be updating for feedback from all.
 - The Chair stated that we were getting a lot of interest from outside parties that want to come in and present to us. The Chair would like the Commission to be very intentional about who we are bringing in. There may be sometimes when the subcommittees don't want to wait on an expert to come at a designated time, your team is more than welcome to bring that person in and bring that to the table with a report for the full Commission. There may be national leaders or national representatives that represent federal government entities we may want to present to the entire commission.
 - We will conduct a poll to collect data in a particular way and on questions that we really care about. And then, some of the questions be open-ended opportunities for women to engage.
 - We want to have stories that support the data to show there is real humans behind those numbers.
 - Senator Elliott raised the importance of history behind why things are the way they are. There is concern that if we do not provide that background people may say "I do not know what you are talking about," or it might be disputed.
 - Dr. Shields agreed. The Research and Writing Subcommittee will take the lead but would like feedback.
 - The Chair noted that we have time built into the timeline so that the report can be available to Commissioners to review a draft report
There will be opportunity to provide feedback.
 - Mellie Bridewell noted that the Research and Writing committee was gathering research and that they are also gathering research, wanted to make sure it was ok for her to do some research.

- Dr. Shields noted that if questions arose that were not on the survey those questions can be submitted for inclusion into the survey.
 - The Chair stated that if there were things that should be shared more broadly or are interesting to your commission, they can be put out for the whole commission to look at.
 - Mellie Bridewell asked if there was a format/structure to put together information to help the Research and Writing Subcommittee handle research and request - a cohesive way to handle within all the subcommittees?
 - Dr. Jones-Branch stated that the Commission should structure their request and research the way they feel it needs to be structured and they would make the adjustments.
 - Dr. Shields stated that if focus groups are being conducted, and a question stands out, the subcommittees can submit five or six questions. We can also add more specific questions to the online feedback form.
- Senator Breanne Davis raised if there was a way to make sure all the information being submitted is in fact from Arkansas women.
 - Dr. Shields brought out that the focus groups and interviews with individuals are not exclusive to Arkansas. Because of this reason the statewide survey idea was breached.
 - Dr. Kathy White Loyd wanted to know how the Commission defined “rural” vs. “urban.” She wanted to make sure that the categories are correct. This is a critical component of the future. They have collected interesting findings already of where the STEM jobs are.
 - The Chair asked if the Commission was confident in the definition of “rural” and “urban.”
 - Dr. Shields brought out there were different definitions, but stated the survey will be anonymous. However, we will be able to place the responder in a county. At that time, we can talk about which counties classify as rural or urban.
 - Tamika Edwards wondered if for consistency purposes if they should use the most consistent definition. When we do our introductory remarks in our findings, state why we used a specific classification. Ms. Edwards also brought out there was a zip code prompt on the online form to try and mitigate responses from outside of the state.
 - Mellie Bridewell brought out they were doing community health assessments right now, and they use a QR code. This approach makes it very easy on the responder and to distribute within the community.
 - The Chair asked about the number of expected responses from the survey that will go out later this year.
 - Dr. Shields expects roughly 1200 surveys. Stated that this would be a narrow margin of error. The survey will include about 50 questions total, with 30 days to respond.
 - The Chair referenced the 2018 Women’s Foundation report and the things that were “teased out.” The Census data provides interesting findings if we take the time to analyze it. We want people to feel

confident that this is going to be exciting work. Even if we are using standard census data, there is insight in that data.

- The Chair addressed committee chairs regarding the timeline.
 - Five to six proposed survey questions are due back to The Chair by August 1, 2022.
 - Survey will be conducted in early September. The Research and Writing Subcommittee will take about a month to analyze those responses.
 - November 1, 2022 draft report to the commissioners.
 - November 15, 2022, deadline to have this report finalized.
 - December 1, 2022 released the report to the general assembly and the Governor.
- The Chair brought out that the subcommittees should be running themselves the way that they see fit. If they want to bring in an expert and if they want to do additional research, it's helpful to know what is going on, but you should be having meetings and hosting events whatever way is best for the subcommittees and their guests.
- The Chair stated that today should be our standard agenda going forward. If committees need help finding an expert, they should leverage the Commission at finding experts.
- Labor Force Participation and Barriers to Entry and Retention subcommittee
 - Labor statics, Arkansas Women in Education and in STEM. Wanted to report one fact about the thinking that Arkansas is behind in STEM jobs or STEM education. 86 % of all jobs in Arkansas are in two places. There is a map that shows that Fayetteville had a big circle and the Little Rock area. And Jonesboro and Conway had a small circle.
 - There are 224 CIO (Chief Information Officers) in Arkansas, which is on par with other states that are about our size. About 34 are women.
 - We may want to have a focus group or a call to see how those women were attracted to the field.
 - Dr. Loyd will meet with the young women and determine their interest in STEM and higher education. There is a relevant quote that says, "you can't be what you can't see." If you don't see anyone working in STEM, you don't know anyone working in STEM, and there are no jobs in the area, they are very unlikely to be interested.
 - Another interesting facet was remote work for State Employees, a report that Representative Julie Mayberry sent just for State employees. Would like to look at the area. Remote work and where the jobs are may be something to pursue.
 - Would like to know how what the percentage of women who are funded in Arkansas. Only 2.3 percent of startups are women-led. There is money out there across the United States.
 - Had interviews with several different people and identified some places like the Venture Center, Innovation Hub, and the Conductor.
 - Had a one-on-one interview with a young woman who had just turned 40 and has one of the top Northeastern Law practices that she has built in three years.

- One of the areas that have been difficult to get information on is single mothers in STEM. When speaking with the new Chancellor at Arkansas State University-Mountain Home he mentioned being “place bound,” which is very relevant. People are left behind because they can’t necessarily pick up and come to Little Rock and get a good job. The idea of “place bound” lends itself to remote work. If all of these people across the United States are able to do remote work that is another focus, we can look at incentives for companies that may be able to say people in that community can work for us.
- Auditor Lea asked if, regarding remote work, if the places Dr. Loyd mentioned was where the companies were or if it was where the people that were holding the jobs were?
- Auditor Lea said that she has seen tons of remote work in her office alone. She said she wondered if it was where the companies were or just the workers?
- Dr. Loyd said that it was just a map, and she would have to follow up to determine, if it was the companies or the workers. Dr. Loyd asked if they were extending that opportunity to people who were already working there?
- Auditor Lea stated that that was probably where the opportunity started but it’s growing. Covid called remote work for people in her office and then they embraced it.
- Dr. Loyd stated that she talked with some of the Chief Operating Officers that she knows and they are all doing work wherever they can find people who have specific skills. Capital One is closing office buildings and others as well. Susan G. Komen will have no more offices. Covid helped it, but they wondered about productivity.
- Ms. Edwards wondered as we talk about “place bound” and people being left behind, will remote work benefit individuals that are placed bound we have to think about the infrastructure. Before remote work particularly in rural areas, we need to examine whether we can promote and talk about remote work. Do individuals that live in those areas have access, and is that a recommendation?
- Dr. Loyd stated that in Mountain Home they have better internet than they have had in other states that they have lived in. Internet infrastructure should be explored throughout the state. Asked is that an initiative of Governor Hutchinson.
- The Chair stated that it was, there was just a report issued the day prior, and there will be more work done on that. There is a lot to dovetail into existing priorities - not just the Governor’s but also the Legislature’s. What other infrastructure?
- Senator Elliott mentioned that on a prior day, the Education Committee had a report on a group of four-year and two-year colleges that banded together to get internet out to places where it is not. When we think of place-based growth, we get more intentional about our language.
- Ms. Morrow noted that by the time girls are out of the sixth grade they have already decided as to what they will do as to education. By the time they are in the sixth grade girls are opting out of science. A focus would need to be placed on that. We can talk about educating women to be in STEM, but if it’s not in their background they are not going to choose that.

- Mellie Bridewell noted that working from home is great but is causing her industry to lose healthcare workers. Everyone else can go home and work, and they can't.
- UAMS Pharmacy Class was reduced to sixty this year. The number started at 120. The class sizes are smaller because less and less people are going into those careers.
- Kim Lane brought out that we are in the middle of the Great Resignation. May people are realizing that they can work from anywhere for any company. Raised that being place-bound may be a mindset for some people. Where there are jobs, but there is an infrastructure problem but there are international jobs that they can work from Mountain Home. It's an interesting call out, we are in the middle of a new workforce right now.
- Dr. Loyd stated that if we are talking about single mothers, what could you do, and can you do education on-line? That was another thought that came. Do we know how much is available that you can get your degree in and never even step into a classroom? Again, it's just awareness in some cases and motivation.
- Ms. Lane said it's about leveling the playing field. You can work for a Fortune 500 company from Mountain Home while in other cases there is an inequality.
- Impacts of COVID-19 Subcommittee
 - Mellie Bridewell stated that they had just had one meeting. Two were planned, but one was cancelled. Discussed how they should set the tone for what they need to do as far as what the Research and Writing subcommittee needed.
 - Mellie Bridewell will be bringing in speakers for their own group, because that is important. NRHA the National Rural Health Association because they are doing a lot of work in this area with Covid and with women. Especially with the Nursing Work Force being the way it is. We did not get very far, we will get momentum once we get a meeting schedule where we can all get together. We have kinda decided that Tuesday's work best. Mine is short but we are on it.
 - The Chair stated that she had no doubt.
 - Mellie Bridewell asked Auditor Lea if she wanted to say anything. Auditor Lea said that she had technical difficulties for the meeting but that next time she would be on an appropriate computer.
 - The Chair asked if there were any questions or concerns for the Covid-19 committee.
 - Mellie Bridewell said that any input is appreciated.
- Family Caregiving subcommittee.
 - Heather Larkin provided the report on behalf of the subcommittee chair. The subcommittee met on April 15, 2022. Ms. Larkin stated that they discussed the executive order and the meaning of "childcare economy" and the scope of the subcommittee. While the subcommittee would have liked to take a broad-based approach to family care, the subcommittee members agreed that they

would need to be focused on child care. The subcommittee will include elder care with some of the feedback we got from our focus group.

- Ms. Larkin stated the subcommittee would report on four key areas as a subcommittee: the childcare industry in Arkansas over the past fifty years; changes in the environment (demands, providers, etc.); the current state of childcare in Arkansas, including the availability, the quality, and the affordability; opportunities for innovation in childcare and the childcare economy; and innovation in childcare.
- The subcommittee will meet every Friday at 9. They will connect with the Department of Human Services and several experts in Arkansas early childcare task force.
- Ms. Lane asked about leave, and specifically paternity leave. Ms. Larkin stated she would add it to the list and certainly talk about it.
- Ms. Bridewell stated that senior care was greatly affected by COVID. A lot of people took their parents out of nursing homes and assisted leaving to bring them home and take care of them.
- The Chair asked if they were looking at that as COVID-19 committee? That could be something that would be informative to the Family Caregiving subcommittee as well
- Kim Lane said that it was on their list, they were just concerned about the breadth of getting it all done. The Family Caregiving committee will work with the Impacts of COVID-19 committee on that.
- The Chair thanked the reporting committees provided a few additional updates.
 - Chair has extended an invitation to Governor Miki Bowman of the Federal Reserve to speak to the Commission about the Fed's work around labor force participation rates. The Department of Labor does the unemployment rates, the Fed does the Labor Force participation rates, The Chair stated that Governor Bowman wanted to come in August and that she would be speaking with Senator Davis about Governor Bowman speaking at the Russellville meeting.
 - The Chair has also extended an invitation to Ms. Mimi San Pedro who is the director of the Venture Center DC Women Achieve Mentorship Program, to address the Commission. The Chair hoped to have her to speak today (April 19), but her schedule did not allow her to attend. The Chair is seeking a Regional Host to accommodate a presentation from her. The Chair wanted to be clear since the meetings are open to the public, even a regional meeting that isn't in Central Arkansas is still relevant. The speaker can still talk about what their best practices are, and lessons learned that they have had. The Chair doesn't want to be confined to where she physically works to bring her in. But if you are interested in having her address a regional meeting, The Chair will be happy to work with her on a schedule.
 - The Chair is still seeking a location and a host in Southwest Arkansas for the October meeting.
 - The Chair also wanted to solicit local or national men-as-allies group contacts. This is something that came out of the feedback in the Fayetteville Meeting. The Chair would like for it to be an organization so that we can receive intention behind their activity and how they see their work supporting women.

- Finally, The Chair is seeking recommendations on how to engage our military community. With Little Rock Air Force Base being here, it makes sense to do something in Central Arkansas. The Chair will be meeting with the Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs and welcomes additional contacts.

Special Guests

- The Chair introduced Dr. Kristy Carter of the University of Central Arkansas, who has conducted research on small business creation among women of color, and Mrs. LaTeasha Gaither-Davis.
 - Dr. Kristy Carter stated that Mrs. Gaither-Davis participated in her study and thanked the Commission for the opportunity to be present. Dr. Carter introduced a video that showed women entrepreneurs in Arkansas and their experiences in the state.
 - Dr. Carter briefly described her findings and those aspects that made women of color the highest growth sector of new businesses in Arkansas – hope and persistence being the main ones
 - Mrs. Gaither-Davis provided a personal background about what inspired her occupational therapy work and described the challenges she overcame as she established her business in eastern Arkansas. Mrs. Gaither-Davis identified a lack of mentorship opportunities, harassment, informal contracting procedures and lack of access to capital as the main challenges to her success.
 - Senator Elliott acknowledged the challenges that come with informal processes and the impact on individuals who don't know the system.
- The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Jones-Branch moved and Senator Elliott seconded. Meeting concluded at 11:31.